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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004182

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANBAR: GOVERNOR FRUSTRATED BY LACK OF ELECTION PREPARATIONS; INTERPRETS IECI "NEGLECT" AS DELIBERATE EFFORT TO SUPPRESS SUNNI VOTE

Classified By: Robert S. Ford, Political Counselor for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

1. (C) Summary. In October 2 meeting with Second Marine Division ADC and Poloff, Anbar Governor Mamoon expressed his disappointment in the lack of follow-through by Election Commissioners after their August 30 outreach visit. He said that if his demands for confirmation of designated polling locations, details regarding polling staff movements and training as well as permission to allow same day registration were not met, he would reveal to the Arab media a deliberate attempt to suppress the Sunni vote. The Governor alleged that the Independent Elections Commission of Iraq (IECI) was complicit in a plot to suppress Sunni voter turnout. PolOff argued that the IECI was an independent body, and its UN advisors were technicians who sought the highest democratic participation possible under difficult circumstances. End Summary.

2. (C) Governor Mamoon Sami Latif al Rasheed expressed increasing frustration with the preparations for referendum elections in Anbar to the Second Marine Division ADC and PolOff. Al Rasheed appeared clearly exasperated with what he perceived to be the level (or lack thereof) of communication from the IECI. In an IECI outreach session conducted August 30, Mamoon said he had made specific requests for IECI decisions on matters such as an extension of the voter registration period, exact locations of polling sites and the workplan for fielding polling workers. Commissioner Izadin al-Mohmmady, who conducted the outreach, allegedly promised the governor feedback on the decision of the entire commission. To date, Mamoon reports there has been no communication from the IECI.

3. (C) Governor Mamoon appeared satisfied with the decision of the IECI to allow detainees to vote in Abu Ghraib and Buca prisons, as conveyed by the ADC. Nonetheless, he bridled at the delay by the IECI in confirming polling center locations in Ramadi and western Anbar. He also sought clarification of when and how polling workers would arrive in the province, clearly preferring local citizens receive training to administer the election. He stressed that security is good and that the governor should have a role in designating polling sites near major population centers. He endorsed the Second Marine Division to facilitate 29 polling centers in the provincial capital, Ramadi, emphasizing the necessity for the country to provide the opportunity for its citizens to vote.

4. (C) The ADC informed the Governor of the next upcoming IECI outreach program in Falluja on October 6, and offered to facilitate his transportation to the event. The Governor mused over the utility of continuing to press concerns vis a vis the IECI at this forum, but with obviously rising frustration, railed against the indignity of having to chase down the commissioners for answers to his questions. Breaking into English, he noted, "The time is very critical". He claimed he would give the commission another week to respond with concrete proposals regarding polling center staff and locations, and if they did not respond, he would address the satellite media.

5. (C) Mamoon charged that the IECI was driven by a political agenda engineered by the Shia who, do not want the constitutional referendum to fail. Mamoon claimed the political milieu in Anbar had changed, that citizens of the violent and economically disadvantaged province now sought to engage in reconstruction and the political process. Mamoon had also requested the IECI to permit voter registration and voting in mosques. He appeared resigned to the IECI's refusal to allow religious sites for this purpose, but clearly did not buy their argument. He also requested same day registration for Anbar alone.

6. (C) Mamoon described the elections as two teams playing, where the referee would be the ballots. He reiterated lack of planning was due to a deliberate plot to suppress Sunni turnout. PolOff argued the IECI was an independent body, and its UN advisors were technicians who sought the highest democratic participation possible in difficult circumstances. Nonetheless, both PolOff and the ADC promised to pass his concerns to commission staff. PolOff recommended Mamoon also continue to press his concerns with Baghdad officials to hasten election preparations in Anbar. The governor

concluded that given Iraqis, experience with past forms of government, democracy was the only solution. He emphasized, however, that the people must be confident in the results of the ballot boxes.

17. (C) Comment: Unfortunately, the initially successful outreach conducted by Commissioner Izadin set local government officials expectations high. Pleased by the show of interest from Baghdad, delays in supposedly promised details have had the opposite effect. At present the Governor (and Deputy Governor) are disillusioned with the IECI and took the opportunity to attack the commission's planned outreach in Falluja (historically a rival of the much larger provincial capital) as a waste of time⁸. Mamoon overestimates his role in the elections process, suggesting he should designate polling centers in Anbar and promoting the use of mosques for the vote. However, his role in urging the battered and embittered population to vote remains critical. The vote in the referendum in Anbar is likely to be against the constitution, but the referendum has two other important aspects. First, it will be a dry run for the December 15 elections. It also will confirm that the Transitional Iraqi Government was sincere in including all those who want to participate in the political process. The governor has questioned this sincerity.. He is concerned that if the designated limited polling sites, are not located great near distances from pmaior population centers, the referendum wwill stir a most likely backlash from the Anbar electorate.the next administration. I'm confused - are there limited polling sites far from population centers or is this confirmation of the ITG's sincerity - which is it ?? Embassy Baghdad is working with the IECI and UN to ensure Ma'mun's concerns are understood and that the IECI explains to him what it is doing. End Comment.
Khalilzad